



# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 7 - 11, 2013



## WATERFOWL PROGRAM

Prepared by:

**Houston Havens**

Conservation Resources Biologist Migratory Game Bird Program

MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Cell: 662-299-0273

[houstonh@mdwfp.state.ms.us](mailto:houstonh@mdwfp.state.ms.us)

Due to the long period of inclement weather, data collection during this survey was slightly reduced from normal levels. However, MDWFP biologists were able to complete the early January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey during the week of January 7 – 11, with the exception of flying the southernmost counties along the Mississippi River (i.e. from Warren County south to Wilkinson County). After a relatively dry start to the duck season, the recent period of heavy rains flooded most areas with water management capability in the Delta and have also caused a large amount of natural flooding, particularly in the south Delta. Many areas which were shallowly flooded during late fall or early winter are now deeply flooded at or above their optimum levels. These extremely wet conditions provide many options for ducks seeking newly flooded shallow wetlands across the Delta landscape, which can sometimes lead to difficult hunting conditions or poor success.

Overall, early January duck estimates were significantly below average compared to the same surveys in previous years (Table 1 and Figure 1). All groups of ducks surveyed (e.g. mallards, other dabblers, and divers) followed the same trend, with estimates below the past averages for this time of year. Mallards were the most abundant species observed, followed closely by northern shovelers.

The northern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of managed wetland habitat on the landscape. However, different from many other past surveys, the southwestern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of mallards, likely due to the large amount of natural flooding from rivers, bayous, and intact natural wetlands. The northwestern region contained the highest abundances of diving ducks.

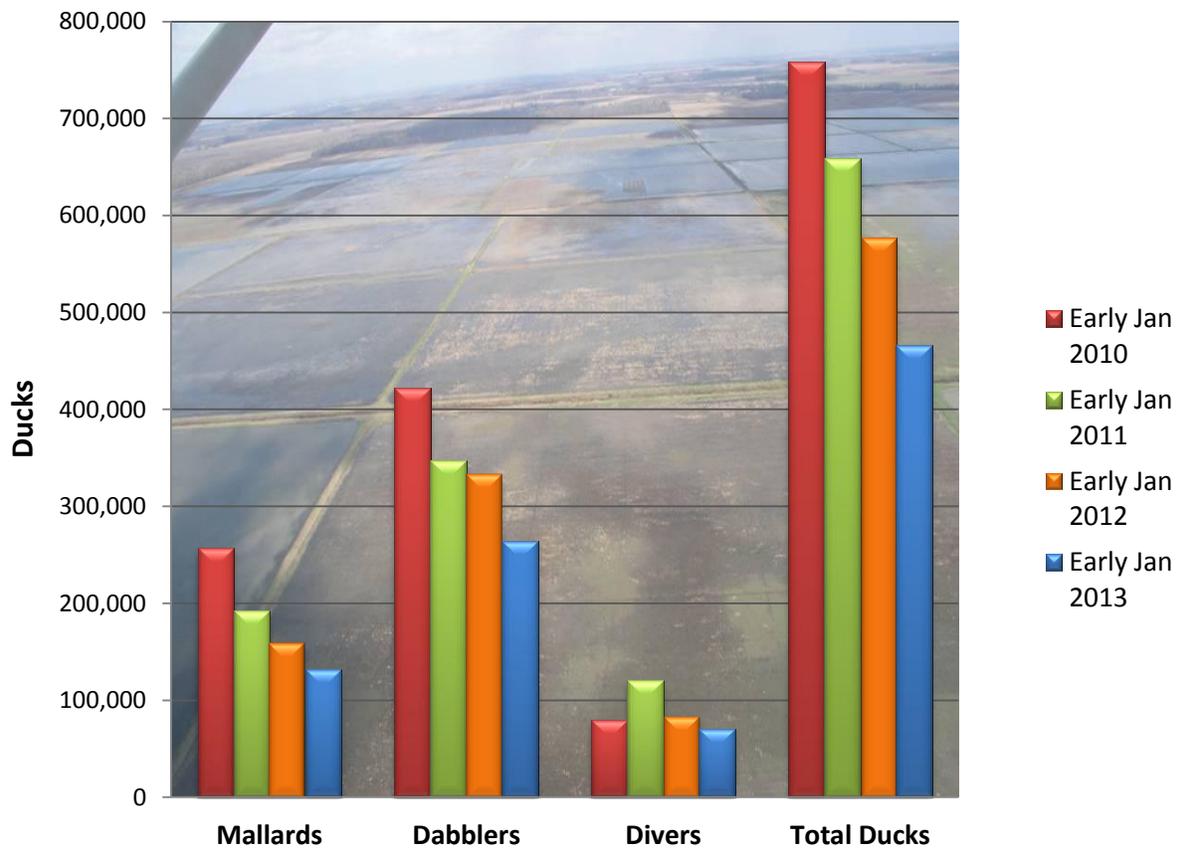
Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using large expanses of flooded habitat along the shallow edges. Flooded agricultural fields held the greatest abundances of mallards and other dabblers, followed closely by natural moist-soil habitat. Most diving ducks were observed using large permanent wetlands such as deep sloughs and oxbow lakes. Most ducks using large flooded fields were observed in the shallow “leading” edges of water or in the centers of fields. This is likely due to ducks exploiting newly flooded food resources at proper depths, while also avoiding levees and tree lines where hunters can easily hide.

The next aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to begin the week of January 22, 2013. After winter storms which brought ice and snow during the week of January 14, biologists and hunters are optimistic that Mississippi will again see peak waterfowl populations during late January. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2010-2013. Previous years' estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to 2013.

Species	Survey Period			
	Early Jan 2010	Early Jan 2011	Early Jan 2012	Early Jan 2013
Mallards	256,998	191,799	159,512	131,930
Dabblers	421,827	346,647	333,430	263,852
Diving Ducks	79,704	120,532	83,880	70,775
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>758,529</b>	<b>658,978</b>	<b>576,822</b>	<b>466,557</b>

**Figure 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2010-2013. Previous years' estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to 2013.



## Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 11, 2013



### Description

- Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)



# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 11, 2013

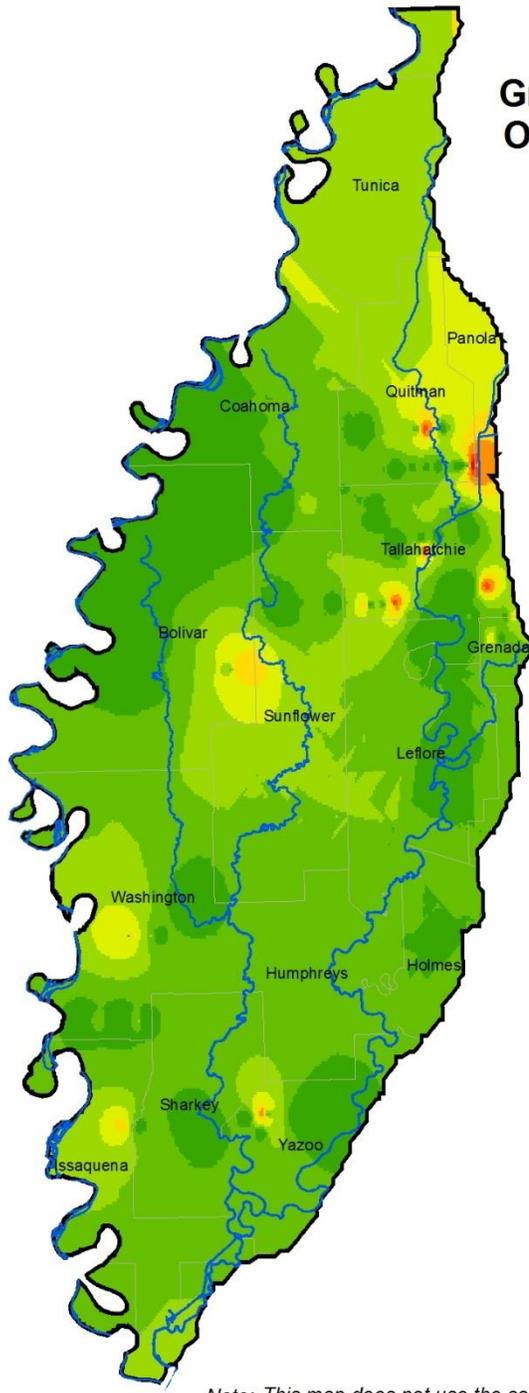


## Description

- Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)



# Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 11, 2013



## Description

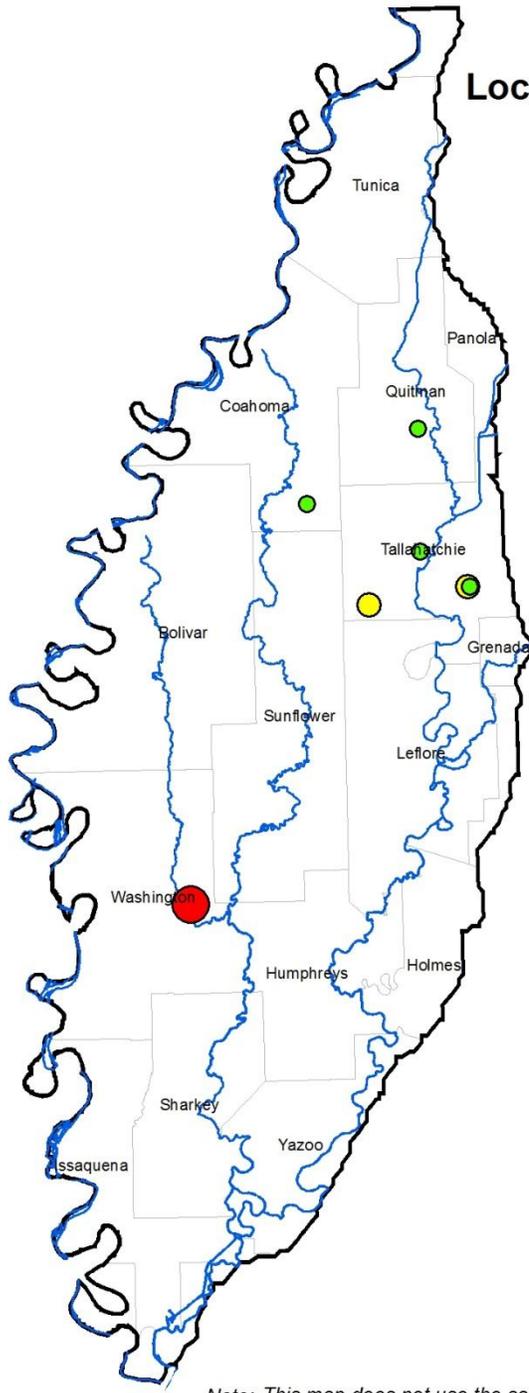


*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.*

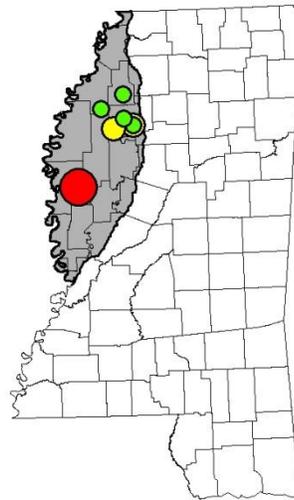
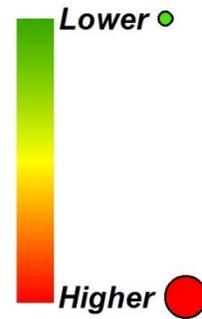
Prepared by MDWFP  
GIS Lab 23, Jan. 2013



## Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 11, 2013



### Description



*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate some locations of light geese in the Mississippi Delta.*

Prepared by MDWFP  
GIS Lab 23 Jan. 2013

